



CONSERVATION UPDATE 98

ROD GRAMS

UNITED STATES SENATOR ■ MINNESOTA

Dear Friends:

Since my election to Congress in 1992, I have been an advocate for balancing the need for environmental protection with our reliance upon economic growth to maintain our standard of living. Far too often, those two laudable goals are intermixed in combative rhetoric which only serves the extremes in our society.

The issues and initiatives you will find in this newsletter represent a small portion of the matters we are currently addressing in the United States Senate. They are issues I believe are important to people throughout our great state. In Minnesota, we have a unique understanding of the value of both rural and urban areas. We are perhaps alone in our diversity of culture, opinion, landscape, and way of life. That is why issues of environmental concern are so important to us and why we must be ever vigilant of the consequences of our actions.

I hope you find this newsletter helpful towards your understanding of what is happening in your nation's capitol. I welcome any comments, both positive and negative, and encourage you to contact my office at any time with your thoughts and concerns. I often say that Minnesotans are the true experts on the issues, and I rely upon them for guidance in the United States Senate.

Sincerely,

Rod Grams
United States Senator

NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT CO-SPONSORSHIP

On April 30, I was pleased to join 55 of my colleagues in co-sponsoring the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). In Minnesota, NAWCA currently funds a total of 20 programs. NAWCA funding of \$18.4 million in Minnesota during its eight-year history has spurred an additional \$25 million in private contributions to complete habitat projects. In 1996 alone, 1.6 million Minnesotans participated in wildlife-associated activities, generating an estimated \$3.6 billion, both directly and indirectly, for the State's economy.

VISION 2020 PARKS REFORM COSPONSORSHIP S. 1693

On March 17, I became a co-sponsor of S. 1693, The Vision 2020 National Parks Restoration Act. This bill, authored by Senator Craig Thomas of Wyoming, is a modest, common-sense approach to improving both the management and facilities of National Parks by bringing everyone to the table and seeking consensus. The introduction of the Thomas Parks Bill is an important first





step towards a consensus reform package to bring accountability to park management, address the tremendous backlog of park projects, and improve visitor services. This bill has been voted out of committee and is now pending before the Senate.

BWCAW

In 1995, I joined Congressman Oberstar by introducing legislation to restore motorized portaging in the BWCAW consistent with the promises made in 1978 to the people of northern Minnesota. I am pleased to say that next year motorized portaging will finally return to Trout Lake and Prairie Portages in the BWCAW. This agreement moves us a long way towards restoring the 1978 agreement and bringing stability to northern Minnesota.

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

I continue to hear from Northern Minnesotans regarding their concerns with the increasingly restrictive management of Voyageurs National Park. This past year's ban on all-human activity in certain portions of the Park is just the most recent in a long line of policies which ignore local input and contradict the multiple-use mandate of the Park. Too often, our natural resources are managed for the enjoyment of the few, to the detriment of the majority of park users. This, at times, seems to be the case in Voyageurs as well.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Senator Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho has introduced S. 1180, The Endangered Species Recovery Act of 1997. Senator Kempthorne introduced this bill to address the problems with the ESA. Since 1973, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed over 1,500 species but removed only 27 — only 4 of which were a direct result of recovery methods. Senator Kempthorne is fond of

saying that the emergency room is full with patients but no one is receiving treatment. Clearly, something must be done to bring certainty to landowners who must struggle with the presence of a listed species and ensure the actual recovery and delisting of endangered species.

BUD GRANT LETTER TO USFWS

Many Minnesotans were stunned to learn that former Minnesota Viking coach Bud Grant and his hunting party were cited in Nebraska for allegedly "baiting" a field with corn in preparation for hunting Snow Geese. Coach Grant and the others in his party were in Nebraska at the invitation of the Nebraska Department of Tourism. The events surrounding this incident concern me greatly because I and all Minnesotans know Coach Grant to be not only an avid sportsman, but a man of honor and integrity. For this reason, I made inquiries to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the events leading up to the alleged baiting incident. I believe Coach Grant to be innocent of any knowledge of baiting which may have occurred during this hunt and hope he will be cleared of any wrongdoing.

ROADLESS POLICY

This winter, without even minimal consultation with Congress, the Administration unilaterally announced an 18-month moratorium on new road building in areas considered "roadless" within our national forests. Public policy and government initiatives such as this which dramatically impact the lives of Americans are supposed to be undertaken with great caution, so that they reflect both the deliberative consideration of the United States Congress and the will of the people. That is what our framers envisioned and labored to ensure, and that is what Americans expect from their government. The one-sided approach of the new roadless policy represents not the best, but the worst that our government has to offer its citizens.

AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVERS INITIATIVE

President Clinton, during his 1997 State of the Union Address, announced that he would designate 10 rivers for inclusion in his American Heritage Rivers Initiative (AHRI). This decision, however, was made without Congressional consent, thereby circumventing the deliberative legislative process afforded by our Constitution. Further, the AHRI contains vague and undefined language which leaves questionable the potential impact the proposal may have on individual property owners living along a designated river. For these reasons, I recently joined Congressman Gil Gutknecht in asking the Administration to exclude the Upper Mississippi River in Minnesota's First Congressional District from consider-

ation. I do not believe we need mandates from the federal government in local land-use decision making in order to improve our cities' riverfronts and improve the environment.

NORTHWEST ANGLE

I was stunned to learn of the actions of Ontario earlier this year when it imposed an unfair and unprecedented limit on anglers fishing in Canada but returning to Minnesota resorts. The resort owners and anglers of the Northwest Angle have been unfairly disadvantaged by Ontario's one-sided decision. That is why I have written to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright seeking the assistance of both the Department of State and the International Joint Commission in finding a resolution to this dispute. I do not believe we can continue to see decisions made by either Ontario or the State of Minnesota which foster mistrust and unfairly impact innocent citizens of either country.

A CLOSER LOOK

Responsible Environmentalism: Defining a New Partnership

In a nation built on compromise and cooperation, few great debates in our history have been resolved in favor of the few to the detriment of the many. Rarely have our leaders chosen to address issues of national or state-wide importance by conceding to the extremist position. Only by considering the merits of each side in a dispute have we as Americans found the consensus by which our nation has prospered for nearly 225 years.

Over the past few decades, though, issues of environmental concern have moved away from consensus and increasingly toward the margins. Americans have enabled such a shift because even though we've grown more environmentally aware, in many cases we've failed to become more environmentally educated, resulting in extremes on both sides of many issues. This past year, a 14-year-old student in Idaho used a simple experiment to prove this observation.

In a story reported across the country, young Nathan Zohner entered a project in a local science fair warning people of the dangers of "dihydrogen monoxide," or DHMO. He described DHMO as a substance potent enough to prompt sweating and vomiting, cause severe burns in its gaseous state, or even kill if accidentally inhaled. Further, he claimed, DHMO contributes to erosion, decreases the effectiveness of automobile brakes, and can be found in acid rain and cancerous tumors.

Nathan then asked 50 people to sign a petition demanding strict control or a complete banning of the chemical. Not surprisingly, 43 said yes, while five would not sign and two were neutral. What's surprising to many who read this story is that "dihydrogen monoxide" is merely water — a substance we all know is completely safe when handled and consumed properly.

Sadly, it took the efforts of a 14-year-old boy to point out the drastic lengths to which our society has taken the rhetoric of environmental protection. Americans today fear everything from drinking water to raindrops — and are spurred on by leaders who are often masters of fiction, whipping up doomsday scenarios prompted by our supposedly "careless treatment" of Mother Earth.

I consider myself an environmentalist. So do most Minnesotans to varying degrees. I don't believe there's a parent alive willing to accept the proposition that our children or grandchildren will ever have to endure dirty water or filthy skies. Our children deserve to live in a world which affords them the same environmental opportunities their parents enjoy today. Our children also deserve to have jobs, to make a livable wage, to raise their families in a country which allows access to our natural resources, and to live in an era which promises opportunity and progress. The thought that we must give up one ideal for the other is absurd, yet that's what we are too often being asked to do.

In Minnesota, several important debates in the coming months will likely be dominated by the type of inflammatory rhetoric that troubled young Nathan Zohner. Front and center are discussions concerning logging in northern Minnesota forests. Congress and the Clinton Administration long ago recognized that our forests are a



renewable resource that must be maintained in both the interests of forest health and public use. Yet, dragged into court by radicals, the U.S. Forest Service now finds itself defending its ability to manage our public lands for all Americans, not just a select few. Nobody wins when the debate shifts to such extremes.

A similar debate swirls around the reintroduction of the timber wolf. A successful reintroduction effort has led to an ever-increasing number of timber wolves in northern Minnesota. More wolves, however, mean more meetings between wolf and man, and farmers and residents now face a wolf population that at times threatens their safety and livelihoods. While tensions grow, livestock and pets are being mauled and threats of costly litigation are preventing sensible government management. By even the mere threat of court action, meaningful debate is stifled by combative extremist rhetoric.

While the environmental fringe continues to dominate public policy, a Wirthlin Worldwide Study conducted last August revealed that only 11% of Americans consider themselves "active environmentalists" while 57% are "sympathetic" to environmental concerns. The same study found that 70% of Americans believe they should not have to choose between environmental quality and economic growth. Clearly, Americans want their leaders to work pro-actively towards a clean and healthy environment, but not to the extreme and certainly not at the cost of their safety, their jobs, or their individual freedoms.

As the 21st century nears, society must answer the questions of environmental protection with a new commitment to pragmatism. Government, on all levels, must do its part as watchdog while empowering those being regulated to develop unique and innovative means

of compliance. At the same time, we must promote ideas that create public/private partnerships and encourage companies and individuals to take voluntary steps to protect our natural resources. Through education and awareness, we'll be able to approach environmental issues in a way that fosters compromises and ensures public policy is pursued in the best interests of all.

Eliminating the inflammatory rhetoric which so consumes the environmental debate won't be easy, but if we're going to work together to ensure the splendor of our natural resources far into the future, it's a step we're going to have to take.

CONCLUSION

Your input is vital to the success of these and other initiatives Congress may consider, and, as always, I encourage you to contact me with your comments and suggestions. _____

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